

The work of Richard Mosse regarding the representation of the refugee crisis

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Master Thesis in Media Studies: Film and Photographic Studies

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May 2018

Number of Words (excluding notes and list of references): 17.860

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Introduction

It was in 2017 that I first came upon with what sparked my interest for the topic which I am writing this thesis about. At some point during that year I was reading an article about a photographic project on war refugees from Syria. As the war in Syrian and the immigration crisis were major news topics, many photographers worked on these matters. However, this specific photographic project was not like the other ones. As I gazed upon the work of this photographer I got immediately impressed. At first sight they seemed as regular black and white photographs but there was something unusual about them. That was because these pictures were infrared, black and white pictures that had recorded tones not on the basis of light transmission, but on the basis of the heat being exposed by the subjects of the photographs. The project was called *Heat Maps* and was made by the photographer Richard Mosse (Figures 1 & 2).

Richard Mosse is a photographer who travelled to numerous countries in order to visit commonly travelled routes by war refugees, in their journey to reach safe grounds in Europe. Some of the countries he visited during this project are: Germany, Serbia, Lebanon and more, but also Greece where he realized a large part of his project. Throughout this project this distinct method of photography was employed, which does not record light as conventional photography does, but instead it records the heat emitted by the subject being photographed. In contrast to other photographs of the same issue, Mosse's ones unmistakably stand out. His images could simultaneously be described as bizarre and captivating; otherworldly, eerie photographs because of their displayed forms and subject matter, but beautiful at the same time because of their strangeness. Aside from the series *Heat Maps*, his work on the refugee crisis also consists of a video installation titled *Incoming* (Figures 3 & 4).

Mosse's award winning career ranges back more than a decade. His oeuvre consists of various projects on photography which has led to his international recognition. Some of the prizes he has been awarded so far are: the 2014 Deutsche Börse Photography Prize, for his experimental photography to represent brutality and struggle in a different manner, Yale's Poynter Fellowship in Journalism, a grant by the Pulitzer Center on Crisis reporting, and also the 2017 Prix Pictet for the project *Heat Maps*. His oeuvre has been exhibited in international venues around the world, for instance the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, Foam museum in Amsterdam, and Akademie der Künste in Berlin. Taking into consideration this

project, the atypical character of it gives rise to numerous questions, and thus became the reason for my research on this work.

The main question that arises in this thesis in regards to the projects *Heat Maps* and *Incoming* is what these images can possibly address and mean. In other words, what does Mosse's work on the refugees contribute to debates on reality, truth, and representation of refugees in press photography, and how does the employment of infrared film affect this association? In order to come to a resolution, a research on the basis of text and visual material will be undertaken. The research of this case study will be approached with a particular strategy, and that is the three phases analysis of visual meaning making as formulated by Gillian Rose: the creative phase, the phase of the image, and the phase of the viewer.¹

The first phase will be researched in chapter one. The main question that arises is: how does the creative process contribute to the significance of *Heat Maps* and *Incoming*? In the second chapter the second phase will be analyzed, which means that the ways his work relates to – and stresses claims of – realism and truth in photography, and more specifically in press photography, will be investigated. In the same respect in the third and last chapter the final step of this meaning making process will be explored, in a research of how Mosse's choice of displaying his subject matter affects the perception of his work by the viewer, how the viewer becomes an active spectator, and what issues of representation arise in doing so. Taking into consideration that photography projects like Mosse's often carries notions of press photography, taking his work on the refugees as a case study I hope to offer some insight into issues that arise from this type of photography.

In the second chapter, an analysis of the second phase will take place, and that is a study of the issue of representation in photography. In particular, it will be explored how Mosse's work can be associated with the issue of representation of realism and truth in photography, and more particularly, in press photography. This issue will be examined on the basis of the concepts of the *icon* and *index*, and how they are related to Mosse's project on the refugees; more specifically, how these two concepts can be detected in his work, and how their establishment can affect viewers' faith in his photographs. In the following part of this chapter, I will try to make a connection between Mosse's project and the genre of press

¹ Rose, 2007.

photography, and how the work of the former relates to the alleged claim of truth of the latter. Furthermore, taking into consideration the notions of icon and index, I will point out how they conceptually contradict to the realism in press photography, while in opposition, they promote realism in Mosse's work.

In the third and final chapter, the last of the three phases will be studied, and that is the phase of the viewer. An analysis on the issue of presentation in photography will take place as it will be developed throughout the second chapter, and further, an alternative concept of representation in photography will subsequently be explored and related to Mosse's work.

Chapter 1 – The creative development

The main concern of this chapter is Mosse's creative process on the projects *Heat Maps* and *Incoming*, and how this process adds up to their significance. As it has been previously mentioned, the process of visual meaning making according to the British philosopher Gilian Rose consists of three phases. This chapter will focus on the first of these phases, which means that the center of attention will be given on the technologies used by the producer. That being said, any visible representation is affected by its medium, which subsequently acts as an architect for the representation's meaning, form, and impact.² Considering Mosse's work, the importance of the technologies used is rather high, since the visual appearances of the products is strikingly different from outcomes of conventional photography. Therefore, technologies used in his work are of fundamental importance. The point of interest will be on his choice of the camera, and also the role of the camera's photosensitive surface. The reason why the distinction between camera and surface is mentioned, is because various theorists have taken into consideration mostly the camera itself. In doing so, they tend to take for granted - or 'forget' - the importance of choice of the photosensitive surface itself. This debate is of even higher importance since the creation of digital imaging, which has been a common topic of discussion among those who consider that digital imaging has caused the death of 'traditional' film photography. Nevertheless, a camera without its photosensitive material it would be just a box with a hole. In this case study the photosensitive surface is of critical significance, since it is due to its particular traits that it delivers its distinct visual performance.

The initial part of this chapter will focus on the study of the infrared radiation photosensitive material. An explanation of how this type of material works will take place, using various technical sources around this technology. Taking into consideration that in this case study the producer used thermography, which is a different method from colour infrared photography, a further research will take place also for this particular type of infrared photography. A study on the history of this medium and its previous uses will be conducted, as well as on the complications of using this type of photography. Eventually an examination of the producer's choice for this film will occur, due to the fact that understanding the theoretical background of the producer's choice is crucial for this project's interpretation.

² Rose, 2007, p. 17

In the second part of this chapter, an analysis on the producer's choice of the specific photographic gear will take place, and how this decision affects the creative procedure of the project. This part will be studied on the basis of what it means to use partially immobile and complex equipment, in a time where the photographic process has become oversimplified, meaning, that camera gear is made to offer great mobility and is capable of extreme (and safe) production speeds. In addition, this study will also include how the relationship between the photographic process and the gear, may be interpreted in a time of constant, without depth, common press news bombardment.³ To do so, I will use theories that offer awareness on how using a specific medium shapes the outcome of its produce, and how the producer is tied to the medium's specificities. Eventually, a comparative analysis between Mosse's work and war photographers of past times will take place, as it will help us understand these photographic practices in contemporary art.

1.1 Technical aspects of infrared photography

Infrared photography could be characterized as a special type of photography. In contrast to conventional photography where one has a film or an image sensor that captures the visible to the human eye visual spectrum, infrared photography does something else; it records light of different parts of the spectrum that are not typically visible to the naked human eye, and thus, this process offers different outcomes in contrast to conventional photography. It is also possible to record any tone or colour from the spectrum, if the corresponding material used is made to the according specifics. In the case study under discussion, the producer used an infrared thermal radiation sensitive sensor that produces black and white, thermal images. In order to understand how this procedure works, we must first look on how regular black and white sensitive materials function.

To start with, a black and white film consists of several layers. The first (upper) layer is a thin protective one, which helps to prevent scratches and marks on the emulsion. The second one which is the 'heart' of the film is the emulsion, consisting of photosensitive silver halide grains which are spread all over in gelatin. Typically, in a black and white film this

³ Stallabrass, 2013, pp. 29-31

layer is sensitive to ultraviolet radiation and blue light.⁴ Below that, several bonding and base layers follow, which assist the whole structure to remain as one. When a film is exposed to light, the film's silver halide is affected by the light's photons, and in doing so the photon causes the silver halide to form a chemical reaction. In the process of developing a film, the chemicals used interact with the affected silver halide crystals, and eventually after several procedures it ends up with a stable negative developed film. When these negatives are exposed to light (to be printed for instance), the image will appear in its positive form and thus, it will be representing the subject in the original scene.

A normal colour film consists of several layers, in the same manner as in a black and white film. However, instead of a single photosensitive layer, a colour film consists of three different ones with each one responding to one of the three basic parts of the spectrum. These layers are the blue, green, and red primary colour ones, and during the process of film development, each one produces dyes of its secondary colour layers. More specifically, the blue one produces yellow, the green produces magenta, and the red produces cyan. As a result, the colours formed on the developed negative colour film, function on the basis of subtractive colour establishment system. This system uses each one of the secondary colours to control primary ones. In the act of light passing through these layers, the additive colour system takes effect and the combination of the dyes eventually reproduces colours of the initial scene.⁵

Conversely, an infrared radiation photosensitive material functions in a different manner. Particularly, despite having similarities with films in matters of structure as already described above, the main difference with conventional films is the aspect of representation. A typical human eye is capable of observing the visual spectrum from about 380 to 700 nanometres. Infrared material can not only record colours and tones of this same spectrum, but also different ranges of the spectrum. This ability entitles infrared film as able to uncover an invisible to the human eye gamut of colours.

At this point, it should be also mentioned that infrared photography consist of at least of two distinct types; the first one is called near-infrared and records wavelengths between 700 to 900 nanometres, and the second one is called far-infrared and is capable of recording the part of the spectrum between 9.000 to 14.000 nanometres. In my case study, Richard

⁴ Gernsheim, and Mannheim, 2017.

⁵ Eastman Kodak Company, 2005.

Mosse is using the second type of infrared photography, which is also known as the domain of thermal imaging or thermogram. Images produced in these cases are known as false colour and pseudo colour image respectively.⁶ Both false and pseudo colour images are called this way because they ‘sacrifice’ on purpose true colour rendition,⁷ in order to display information that is not perceivable otherwise, something that eventually helps in the detection of such features.⁸ In addition, false and pseudo colour rendition occur when a layer of the photo sensitive strip or a sensor, are unable to render a colour or tone relationship to the original colour of the subject. This allows the detection of different details of visually identical or similar subjects. Therefore, infrared photography by means of colour and tone rendering gives shape to what cannot be seen. Both types of infrared photography function in the same logic. The main differences between them can be found on the fact that they focus on different parts of the spectrum and use different channels of data, thus, the outcome is inevitably different.

Invention of Infrared radiation photosensitive material and its purpose

One of the first examples that led to the creation of infrared photography goes back to 1864, when a German chemist named Herman Vogel – accidentally – discovered that if one combines appropriate dyes with photosensitive emulsion, the outcome will be corresponding to images of the extended spectrum; namely, ultraviolet images.⁹ By using this method, he shot a portrait of a person. As an outcome, he observed some black spots on the face of that person that were not visible to the eye otherwise. Few days later, that person was diagnosed with smallpox. However, the importance of this invention was not given much attention at the time, and it was only almost half a century later that its functions were acknowledged and eventually saw further development.¹⁰

Moving on, in 1910 Professor Robert Wood was credited as the first person to create on purpose the first ultraviolet and infrared pictures. In a lecture he gave in London the same

⁶ Gibson, and Power, 2000, pp. 39-40

⁷ True colours refer to colours that offer natural or close-to natural colour rendition of an object, when this object is directly viewed by a human observer.

⁸ Gibson, and Power, 2000, pp. 39-40

⁹ Davies, 2018, ‘1.3 UV photography’.

¹⁰ Ibid.

year, he was acknowledged as the person who is responsible of “opening up two new worlds; the worlds at each end of the spectrum, beyond the point of limit of vision.”¹¹

Infrared photography was further developed in the United States during the First World War in order to provide better visibility in aerial photography, during non-optimal visual conditions (such as haze).¹² Walter Clark, who is another person that made significant progress in the development of infrared technology, was commissioned by Eastman Kodak in 1934. During this year, he also published a paper describing on the one hand, the infrared pictures that were by then created by the United States Air force, and on the other hand, extended applications of infrared photography, for instance in the field of medicine and forensic science.¹³ In the period of the Second World War, Eastman Kodak Company which was then commissioned by the United States Air force, developed colour infrared technology in order to be used for military and strategic development.¹⁴

Furthermore, throughout the following years, infrared photography became more available widely, and saw further uses. Already by the end of 1930s, there were at least three major film brands that were selling infrared films.¹⁵ Apart from this, infrared film was also applied in various fields, such as in agriculture, art,¹⁶ forest and urban management, while its primary use was in the military. However, in order for infrared photographs to be properly interpreted, they required people with specialized training and appropriate experience on the practice. To make this point more accurate, according to the theorists Joel Snyder and Allen Neil Walsh on their discussion about infrared photography in *Photography, Vision, and Representation*, only when the making process of a photograph is clearly stated and its interpretation is made by an expert, a picture can be valued as an index of truth.¹⁷ Having that in mind, taking into consideration the absence of colour in black and white photography and its even bigger gap from ‘reality’, it can be, therefore, pointed out that black and white infrared images need even more knowledge than the colour infrared ones in the field of specialized training and experience.

A further observation on the aspect of representation has also been seen on the study of aerial war photography. More specifically, “the combination of aircraft and camera did

¹¹ Davies, 2018, ‘1.3 UV photography’.

¹² National Bureau of Standards (1919), pp. 114-19

¹³ Clark, 1934, pp. 119-29

¹⁴ Eastman Kodak Company, 2005; National Bureau of Standards (1919), pp. 114-19

¹⁵ Davies, 2018, ‘1.4 IR photography’.

¹⁶ Rorimer, 1931.

¹⁷ Snyder, and Allen, 1975, pp. 159-62

have far reaching implications for the history of perception.”¹⁸ Cultural historian Bernd Hüppauf argues in his study on representation that, “war killed the natural landscape and replaced it with highly artificial and, within its own parameters, functional spatial arrangements. Aerial photography then, creating a metalevel of artificiality, further abstracted from the reality of this artificial landscape.”¹⁹ The new landscape photographed, “emptied of its traditional points of orientation and its potential for experience visibly reduced to barren functional space”²⁰, made the observers distanced from the human reality. Furthermore, as Hüppauf observed, the impact of the aerial war photography creates a new understanding on how implications of war and battlefields are perceived; “scenes of destruction may be seen as grandiose spectacles or places of pure horror, but they no longer arouse feelings of empathy, pity, or sorrow. Their space is emptied of experience and moral content. (...) The new landscape (...) provided no source for empathy.”²¹ In this way, aerial war photography offers a great functionality for its specific purposes. While at the same time, it produces images of great abstraction. Considering the aforementioned, what is visible in this type of photography is only objects of a relative minimum size, anything smaller than that is invisible; a concept which will act as a basis of this case study.

Despite of all the uses mentioned so far, in modern times, infrared photography has seen most of its application in the creation of artistic photographs. Already a couple of decades after the Second World War, various artists have used this technique in contextually expressing themselves and their times (Figure 5).²² With its advent in the public sector, infrared photography initially known for its military and scientific uses, soon became a medium of artistic expression. Today, infrared photography still has a lot of usage. Other than the applications already mentioned, it is being used in various other fields, assisting in structure development and problem solving of various issues.

Digital imaging by design offers the ability of shooting infrared, but in order to do so one has to interfere with the digital sensors of modern cameras.²³ For this reason, digital sensors in the consumer market have within them an embedded infrared radiation blocking filter, that makes shooting infrared impossible without removing it.²⁴ This translates to

¹⁸ Fox, 2018, p. 126

¹⁹ Hüppauf, 1993, p. 57

²⁰ Hüppauf, as quoted in Fox, 2018, p. 113

²¹ Hüppauf, 1993, p. 56-9

²² During the 1960s for instance.

²³ Farace, 2007.

²⁴ Ibid.

additional costs and necessary ‘sacrifices’ of camera gear for the general public, as the process of removing this filter cannot be reversed; making infrared photography in this way approachable mostly by a target group of committed infrared shooting photographers. On the other hand, there are dedicated infrared cameras produced but are expensive, not suitable for professional photographic purposes, or inaccessible to the public. For instance, infrared cameras like the one Mosse used in this project are considered as military equipment, meaning that, they are inaccessible to the general public and their use is either forbidden or restricted in various cases.²⁵

Digital sensors operate on the basis of a colour grid which is called the Bayer grid; a mosaic of colour pixels responsible for the reproduction of colours in a digital image.²⁶ In contrast to infrared film, the Bayer grid restricts the reproduction of colours as they were to appear on a film strip, due to digital software inherently decoding an analogue signal to a digital one. As a result, this leads to an analysis of colours on the basis of the RGB order. This could be a reason why photographers usually opt for analogue infrared photography instead of digital one.

Moreover, infrared radiation measurement is undetectable by the internal light meters of the cameras, but also of external ones.²⁷ This is a major issue since photographers are usually advised by light measurements and instruments on how to photograph a scene. This results in a time consuming, trial and error, and expensive process of photographing; expensive literally in case of consuming film, but also metaphorically in the act of losing the subject matter of the photograph. Photographing without light measurement could be translated to a sightless way of taking a photograph (as to a certain degree the outcome is uncertain),²⁸ and a sightless attempt of seeing.

Mosse’s use of a military camera

Richard Mosse for his projects *Heat Maps* and *Incoming*, has used a military 50-pound infrared thermal radiation camera, which requires two computers and a 110-pound automated

²⁵ Locke, 2017.

²⁶ Brown, 2016, p. 140

²⁷ Davies, 2018, ‘6.10 Exposure and Metering’.

²⁸ Schuman, 2011.

tripod to operate with.²⁹ The idea of using this type of camera came in 2014 when Sophie Darlington, a wildlife cinematographer and a friend of Mosse, introduced him to this camera and proposed to work with it.³⁰

This military-grade camera is supposed to be a surveillance tool and classified as a military weapon under the international law, and a subject for the U.S. State under the International Traffic in Arms Regulation (ITAR).³¹ More specifically, ITAR is a United States regulatory regime to restrict and control the export of defense and military related technologies to safeguard U.S. national security, which is interpreted by the Department of State Directorate of Defense Trade Controls (DDTC).³² For this reason, Richard Mosse in order to buy and use this military camera as well as transporting it from one country to another, he needed a specific license and official certificate of export clearance, otherwise he could have been charged with a crime.

The camera is actually designed to assist on surveillance purposes, identifying, detecting and tracking targets in war, regarding the fact that it is capable of detecting bodies up to 18 miles away.³³ Today, it has also been used for non-military purposes such as for science and agriculture operations. The interesting part of working with this camera is the fact that its thermal technology and way of operation make it possible to capture human figures and other objects from a long distance even if it is day or night, possibly revealing things that couldn't been visible by a naked human eye, producing black and white images.

Generally, the infrared cameras can be classified into three categories³⁴ which are: the short, mid, and long wavelength cameras. Each of these three camera types refer to cameras that detect different parts of the wavelength spectrum; the short one detects between 0.9-1.7 microns, 2-5 and 7-12 microns respectively. Mid-wavelength cameras and long-wavelength ones are regarded as defense articles by ITAR, which is a term referred by the U.S. to an item designed for military purposes.³⁵ Mosse's camera belongs to the mid wavelength category.³⁶

By using a thermal camera to capture the refugees' journey from the Middle East to the West, specifically of panoramas of refugee camps, Mosse is trying to make the human

²⁹ Locke, 2017.

³⁰ Motal, 2017.

³¹ "The International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR)", 2018.

³² U.S. Department of State, 2018.

³³ Budds, 2017.

³⁴ Overley, 2009.

³⁵ Sierra-Olympic Technologies, Inc., 2017.

³⁶ Mosse, as quoted in Christie, 2017.

beings look only as human beings; the thermal levels of heat prevent people from the distinction of the persons' faces, their colour, and their nationality. This capture of photos only wants to show the travels and trials of these people with a more aesthetic value. That being said, this camera was never designed for storytelling or to be used aesthetically; it was designed for battlefield and awareness and boarder enforcement to detect, track, and kill the enemy.³⁷

“I have got a military tool and I am trying to work against it, so I am rubbing it against the grain, I am trying to find a way to use it against itself (...) in order to communicate the struggle of the refugee”³⁸ - Mosse said in an interview about his photographic project on the refugee crisis. Mosse has worked as a ‘traditional’ photojournalist in the past, covering relevant issues of human struggle. He has expressed his uneasiness on the representational part of traditional realism in photojournalism and documentary photography, by stating that the camera is “intensely literal, yet the world is far from being simple or transparent.”³⁹

Challenging the roles of photojournalism is a mission in his work.⁴⁰ The basic concept of his project is to express messages of truth in a way that conventional photojournalism and documentary photography cannot. Among the primary concerns for his interest on this topic, is the erosion of human rights and the implications of that, and therefore, he is trying to find a way to visualize that. It is a complicated, multifaceted conflict where human struggle is of primary concern. Europe’s response to the matter has been inadequate, especially when compared to how Europe responded to the phenomenal wave of human displacement that occurred after the Second World War. Mosse’s ambition is to confront the viewer in ways with which our governments and societies represent and therefore regard the refugee; it is an attempt to try to make the viewer consider of the ways in which our governments deal with the refugee crisis.

Despite the producer’s intentions to record and represent the refugee crisis, photography is only capable of capturing images to a particular degree.⁴¹ More specifically, photography can record both tangible and intangible objects (intangible such as occurrences). However, there are some ultimate limits to this capacity; photography cannot record

³⁷ Mosse, 2017.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Schuman, 2011.

⁴⁰ Mosse, 2017.

⁴¹ Flusser, 1983.

complicated, contextual matters such as feelings and emotions, thus the difficulty of recording pain and agony in such environments. This is a reason why the producer in this case, as previously mentioned, characterized his medium as a struggle against itself. The photographer is always bound to the limitations of his or her own medium; with the choice of frame, place, time, and method among the few available options to choose from. Other than that, the producer is constrained in expressing his or her ideas in these limits. That being said, Mosse in this case by photographing with infrared, aims to make a connection between the camera and the crisis, as a way of thinking through the ways our governments represent the refugee, the way we are meditating on that, and confronting the viewer with that reality. By producing heat, the camera can actually read and portray all of the intimate aspects of our biological organism such as breath, blood circulation and others; things we cannot often see with a normal camera or the human eye.⁴² This camera does not ‘see’ individuals, but instead it ‘sees’ the masses.⁴³ In this manner, what else can be expressed other than the ‘ordinary’, by means of infrared representation in photography? A question that will be examined further in this thesis.

In an attempt to record the intangible, Mosse employs the technique of thermal imaging. By doing so, for instance, one could literally see the thermal handprints on the blankets and realize how cold these people were; a contrast between the warm hands of the rescuers and the cold bodies of the rescued. This is a way (as Mosse thinks) in which this camera is able to communicate that particular narrative in a more effective way than a normal camera can.⁴⁴ As Ossip Brik already mentioned in 1926, photography is a medium capable of not just implying, but broadening the human vision; a ‘task’ of the photographic image.⁴⁵ That being said, Mosse attempts not to broaden vision in this sense by the use of camera, but by the outcome of its use - the infrared thermal images - and he does so in order to raise awareness to the viewer regarding the subject matter. Despite of the connection infrared photography initially had with representations of apathy (the distanced and military use), we will see how Mosse uses his medium conceptually to draw attention to the intangible human endeavour and eventually generate empathy to the viewer towards the represented subject.

⁴² Mosse, 2017.

⁴³ Foucault, 1997, pp. 242-3

⁴⁴ Mosse, 2017.

⁴⁵ Brik, 1926, pp. 219-20

1.2 “Rubbing it against the grain” - Using a camera with a purpose

As previously mentioned, the photographic process consists of two parts; the photographic gear (the cameras and other auxiliary gear used for instance) and the photosensitive material. In this part, a study on the producer’s choice of the photographic gear will take place, and how this decision affects the creative process of the project; specifically, how the photographic gear that was used influences both the photographer and the structure of the outcomes significance. In Mosse’s work all photographs were made by the thermal imaging camera that he used; a camera that did not offer simplicity of use, had to be cooled down to a specific temperature, and it was particularly heavy. Considering the choice of such cumbersome, slow, and difficult to use equipment, the photographic process had to be precise, thoughtful, and a qualitative decision. That being said, such an approach (in terms of the photographic gear) contrasts greatly to what typical contemporary photographers use for journalistic purposes in the same working environment; which are fields of struggle and battle. Therefore, an examination of what it means to use burdening and intricate photographic tools, in a time where cameras and other equipment have been designed for mobility and simplicity of use will take place. In addition, a comparative analysis between the work of Mosse and that of war and journalist photographers of the past will be conducted, as it will offer insight on photographic practices of contemporary art photography.

Exploring new possibilities in photography

Mosse’s photographic approach in my case study could be said to be evocative of that war photographers had in photography’s early time. However, despite some resemblances in the method, they are not the same. Photography in its early time was characterized by the use of slow and cumbersome equipment. War photographers in the 19th century, such as Felice Beato, inevitably had to wait until the on-going conflict (a battle for instance) had come to an end in order to take their pictures.⁴⁶ Photography’s slowness at the time emphasized the medium’s incapability of rapidly capturing a scene, and therefore freezing any action. In addition to that, the whole gear was too heavy to rapidly carry it around. The term slow was

⁴⁶ Attempts have been to take photographs during battles in the 19th century, but due to long exposures the represented subjects either looked particularly blurred or not recorded at all.

not only applicable in its literal sense due to photography's technical processes of the time, but it was also applicable due to photography's limited distribution.⁴⁷ It was not only until the first quarter of 20th century that photography illustrated conflict occurrences and thus made such events to be considered real.⁴⁸

Considering that it is only possible to perceive a medium's representational power only in comparison to another medium,⁴⁹ the invention of cinema emphasized photography's aspect of immobility. After the invention of cinema, people's assumption of what photography is, shifted into a direction that was now influenced by the moving image. Assumptions of what photography is and implications of the image have been argued by the philosopher Vilém Flusser that they are established by what is called *apparatus*;⁵⁰ a conceptual idea that forms a relation between operator and operation, theoretically motivating them in order to function. The relationship of the two is considered to constitute a *program*.⁵¹ In the program operator and operation unavoidably coexist with each other, both functioning under the scheme constituted by their creator; the power that gives purpose and meaning to the relationship of operator and operation. Flusser in his book *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* defined experimental photography and subsequently its practitioners, as attempting to function against the apparatus; to function against the given state of things, for instance by the operating medium (e.g. the camera) or the market. In doing so, they oppose the standards given to them by the functioning powers, researching ironically at the same time the apparatus and its full potentials. Considering that experimental photographers work against their medium, how is this attempt evident in Mosse's case and why he did it the first place?

Coming back to the relation between photography and the moving image, with the technological development of mass media from the 1920s onwards,⁵² the notion of what photography is and how it is to be used for this purpose (for mass media production) was further shifted. Recognizing the capabilities of the medium for such purposes,⁵³ the photographer's ambition was now to capture the 'decisive moment'⁵⁴; to be at the right place

⁴⁷ Company, 2007.

⁴⁸ Trachtenber, 1989, pp. 72, 80

⁴⁹ Bolter, and Grusin, 1999, p. 65

⁵⁰ Flusser, 1983.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 26-7

⁵² McQuail, 2012, pp. 175-7, 248-9

⁵³ Ibid., p. 249

⁵⁴ Moran, 2010, p. 181

at the right time, a notion that encapsulates photography at a large part and especially traditional photojournalism. This notion continued to be followed until further technological innovations in the industry occurred, and began to change with the inventions of more easily transportable cameras in 1967.⁵⁵

Mass media, which is a form of mass production, in the practical field ‘demands’ a particular *technological model* to be followed.⁵⁶ This model continuously affects the production processes of such media businesses, and as an effect, it requires from their practitioners to adapt to the latest technological inventions and innovations in order to remain competitive in the market. Considering that photojournalism is part of the mass media production, the practice of photojournalism consists of this technological model. Photojournalism was, and is, usually accompanied by the employment of mobile, fast, and the latest technical gear at the time. The difference between the photojournalists of the past and the modern ones can be found in the technology improvement; those of the past had to carry all the hard equipment and find the right spot at the right time, while the latter ones with the help of technology they can go around with all the necessary equipment they need for the various photographic situations. Therefore, in regards to the technological development, digital technology and innovations for lightweight material could be regarded as the optimum tool for conventional photojournalism due to its practicality and ease of use.

Moreover, as video cameras were further developed and their use became widely spread, photography has evidently lost ground to the representation of events by them. New technological innovations, and specifically the use of video, have reduced the value of photography due to the fact that the video has the ability to capture events in a development of time and present it with little cost. Today, devices of assorted sizes can be used to grasp a scene. In addition to this, with the expansion of various media and in particular with the internet, almost everyone can watch a live stream of a video on television or a computer, or share it at the same time online. These new technological improvements forced photographers to change their way of working by adapting themselves to new approaches of the concepts of photography in our times.

With the advent of the video camera the value of photography has been on decline. Among the reasons for that, is that it has been noticed that news video content is more

⁵⁵ Bensinger, 1981; The invention of the first portable video camera: the Sony Portapak in 1967.

⁵⁶ McQuail, 2012, p. 329

appealing to the viewer than the photographic one. For instance, on the occurrence of the attack on September 11 2001 it has been recognized that it was an event that changed the way news are covered today;⁵⁷ it was an example of an event which representation could not be delivered linearly. People used the television to watch, and the internet to directly discuss and add bits of information the users personally knew throughout the procedure of the event as it happened.

Newspapers have cut to an extent the employment of photographers for news coverage.⁵⁸ Part of this result is due to the effect that the social media and the internet have changed the ways news items are spread, to lower their businesses expenses, and also in favour towards the video for news coverage as mentioned. This has as a consequence, if the photographer has a job at all, to function under strict time limits and specific agendas. In this regard, it could be considered that photojournalism is coming to an end; the lack of funds and time could be responsible for this decline. However, in response to this crisis, it could be argued that it is the photographer's 'responsibility' to find new ways of representation and ways to extend the visual experience, and thus redevelop a new concept for photojournalism. As Robert Sinnerbrink has asserted in one of his articles about a crisis in the discipline of humanities and specifically on film studies, "a crisis can mean many things: a turning point, a period of upheaval, a state of instability heralding danger or destruction, a critical moment when the future of an established way of thinking or a way of life is put into question or demands a response."⁵⁹ That being said, a crisis should not always carry negative connotation. It is a period of confrontation of a process that is considered obsolete or outmoded, in an attempt to either reprogram it or completely remove if it no longer bears meaning.

As previously mentioned, among the goals of photography is to broaden visual perception; to overcome limits 'set' in photography. Such limits are set by the apparatus, and it is the experimental photographer's aim to break such limits.⁶⁰ In order to do so photographers should not be acting like people who mindlessly take snapshots, or documentary photographers who record new scenes from a usual perceptive. The reason is, that in both of these two cases, they produce information they do not understand; according to Flusser's words, "what they produce are camera memories, not information, and the better

⁵⁷ Bell, as quoted in Krotoski, 2011.

⁵⁸ Taibi, 2017.

⁵⁹ Sinnerbrink, 2012.

⁶⁰ Flusser, 1983, pp. 57-64

they do it, the more they prove the victory of the camera over the human being.”⁶¹

Experimental photographers therefore aim to interfere and break such conventions set by the apparatus, which subsequently can be interpreted as limits set by artistic traditions and the mass media industry.

Considering the technological ideal that the mass media in the practical field follows as mentioned above, Mosse’s attempt to interfere with this industry’s apparatus is by the employment of the unconventional photographic gear he used. In order to attain a different viewpoint on the matter, he chooses not to use the photographic gear conventional photojournalists adopt; instead of producing ‘mindlessly’ information from a usual perspective, he ‘broke the rules’ and produced this unconventional, beautiful, and deep concept. In doing so, his experimental approach did not only offer a new perspective on the subject matter, but also a new perspective on the crisis of photojournalism.

It should be also mentioned in this point the fact that, Mosse’s approach on the refugees’ project could be partially characterized as employing aspects of aftermath photography. This type of photography concerns not capturing the time of the events while they are occurring, but their consequences when all the other photographers and video reporters have left.⁶² In this way photographers get the opportunity to observe the events from a distanced point or to approach them with different media. Photographing this way, the photographer is distanced from the action itself, and therefore, may offer a new perspective to the matter.

In a first analysis of Mosse’s approach on the projects *Heat Maps* and *Incoming*, it has been argued that it provided significant connotations to these. More specifically, with the use of thermal infrared photography Mosse made evident something that could not otherwise be seen; he managed to portray intimate aspects of our biological organism and made them possible for the viewer to see, forming a relationship between the camera and the cause. At the same time with the use of infrared, he managed to generate a contradiction with the medium’s history and the ways it was previously used; infrared photography was developed and initially used for military purposes and was eventually used for humanitarian ones as well. In addition to this, Mosse’s choice of complex and difficult photographic equipment,

⁶¹ Flusser, 1983, pp. 59

⁶² Company, 2007.

made a statement to the world of photojournalism; by denying the traditions of photojournalism and the apparatus of mass media, he tried to give a new meaning to the crisis of this field by giving a new perspective to his photographs that go beyond the traditional photographic manner of thinking.

Richard Mosse is not capturing his photographs during the war in Syria, but he is recording the after war struggle of the people moving from one place to another in their journey to seek for asylum. As a consequence, his photographs are depicting the aftermath of the conflict into the people, who were forced to leave their homes searching for safety hundreds of kilometers away. Under these circumstances, Richard Mosse managed, by giving various meaning in his photographs as already mentioned, to challenge conventional photojournalism by giving a different perspective on how people feel on the issue of human rights on the one hand, and how governments and organizations deal with these on the other hand.

Chapter 2 – Representation of reality and truth claim in photography

In this chapter the issue of representation in photography will be studied; more specifically, the issue that arises in relation to its claims of truth that leads to a supposed realism of representation, particularly in the genre of press (photojournalism and documentary) photography. To start with, by taking Richard Mosse's work in the projects *Heat Maps* and *Incoming* as a case study, an analysis on the issue of truth claim will take place; that is to say, how his representation of the refugee crisis interrogates arguments of truth in press photography. I will therefore exert to connect and compare Mosse's work with this genre, taking into consideration that the latter is based on the concept of reality, which subsequently is related to the notions of *index* and *icon*.

In the first part of this chapter, a study on realism in photography on the basis of the concepts of the index and the icon will be conducted. Considering the representation of the refugee crisis in *Heat Maps* and *Incoming*, it will be examined how the concepts of icon and index can be related to this work. In addition to this, in this section it will be pointed out how the agency of these photographs affects viewers' faith in them.

In the second section, the relation between Mosse's work and press photography will be highlighted, and specifically how his work can be connected to claims of truth and realism that derive from this genre; particularly, how representation in press photography secretly lies while claiming to be true will be discussed, and in addition to this, we will see how Mosse's work blatantly deceits as a reaction to this claim. We will see how the reaction of this relation stresses the alleged difference between *iconicity* and *indexicality*. As noticed in the previous chapter, photography is only capable of representation to a certain extent. That being said, issues of representation that arise in photography form an oxymoron condition; a condition where photography unintentionally displays lies, and at the same time speaks of truth. This chapter is a study dedicated to this condition by taking Mosse's work as a case study.

2.1 Theories of real interrogated by Mosse

Taking a look at the photographs of the refugee crisis made by Richard Mosse, one is confronted with images of people and places made in an unusual black and white technique. Thoughts of strange and otherworldly depictions most likely strike one's mind while observing these photographs. Most of these photographs are portrayals of people, either stacked in places that look like settlements, on vehicles such as boats or cars, or close up portraits, while the rest of the photographs show other locations and situations. Nevertheless, at first sight, all of them raise one question; what one is looking at. Considering these pictures, it would be reasonable to ask how they are associated to reality.

The main question that arises from looking at these images, is how Mosse's photographs are connected to the reality they represent, which can be answered referring to the semiotic theory; a theory which has been used to analyze sign systems in photography in general and will help us understand Mosse's approach in his project on the refugees. More specifically, the semiotic theory explores the study of signs as a part of communications; whereas these signs can refer to icons, indexes and symbols. Starting from the index, one can support that indexicality in photography refers to the causal relationship between the photographed subject and the resulting image.⁶³ Apart from indexicality, a photograph also has what is called iconicity; in order for the photography to represent the truth it must resemble the object it portrays visually, as it is in reality. Last but not least the semiotic theory refers to symbols; a symbol is a sign that photographers use in order to define a clear statement of the objects displayed and improve the impact of their photos, and therefore, the photographs can be symbolic. More precisely, photographers may use either symbols from everyday life or play with the different functions of the camera.

Applying these three types of signs from the semiotics theory onto the work of Mosse, we can claim in the first place that his work is indeed following the sense of index. In particular, Mosse's photographs of the refugees resemble the human figures, the landscapes and every other object he captured with his camera; his photographs represent a causal link (index) to reality. However, one cannot say the same for the iconicity of his work, since his photographs of people and landscapes do not look exactly as they are in reality. More specifically, Mosse used thermography and black and white technique, something that in the

⁶³ Gunning, 2004.

end altered the appearance of people and landscapes, and therefore making them look unreal. Moreover, referring to the symbolic part of the photographs in Mosse's work, we must first examine why black and white photography can be symbolic itself.

While for long black and white photography was the only technique that a photographer could practice, even with the appearance of colour photography, photographers – and especially the practitioners of *straight photography* – continued to use the first technique since the aesthetic was better from the coloured one; taking also into consideration the fact that the colour in the photographs did not have at that time the same quality colour as in reality. Specifically, as Brik has asserted in his discussion between photography and painting, the use of black and white photographs instead of coloured ones, “was precisely because [black and white] photograph[s] [since they] were not coloured they could offer a more accurate impression of nature than painting. Paintings can only “*imitate*” nature's colours, but never actually “*transmit*” them.”⁶⁴

Moreover, straight photography was a movement that emerged in the late 19th century where its main principle was to maximize image's graphic structure, and enforce the image's documentary aspect.⁶⁵ Among its principles, it required its practitioners to remain true to photography's material in order to validate its identity as real; which means that no adjustments or manipulations were accepted, as failing to do so would alter the truthfulness of the image. Thus, straight photography established its own aesthetics. These aesthetics became popular and greatly influenced the practice of traditional and socially oriented press photography during the 1930s.⁶⁶ From that moment on, practitioners of press photography celebrated and embraced the alleged truth of representation to reality that straight image offered. The trend of this photography persisted until the late 20th century, and in order for an image to be acquiring artistic status it had to maintain a “straight approach to life.”⁶⁷ Therefore, regarding straight photography, it can be said that (part at least) of its founding principles continue to be a driving force for various related photographic genres as of today; for instance, in press photography which is of our interest in this case.

Today, digital imaging technology is being constantly developed and thus getting closer to the recording of true colours, however, black and white photography can offer distinct style to the image. A photographer can choose to use black and white photography for

⁶⁴ Brik, 1989, p. 214

⁶⁵ Van Gelder, and Westgeest, 2011, pp. 23-5

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 24

⁶⁷ Kracauer, 1980, p. 254

various reasons. The first one, refers to the certain meanings and emotions that photographers may want to pass through their photographs and subsequently to the viewer; in our case study, it could be said that black and white photography is deliberately used in order to dramatize people's stories, making the struggle and the horror that these people have lived more vivid (which can be interpreted as a photographer's attempt of representing such emotions closer to reality); according to Flusser, "colour photographs are on a higher level of abstraction than black-and-white ones. Black-and-white photographs are more concrete and in this sense more true. They reveal their theoretical origin more clearly."⁶⁸ Secondly, referring to the technical use of black and white photography, photographers tend sometimes to prefer this technique as it can offer particular styles to the image; for instance, it can play with light and shadow, lines, and forms highlighting this way the subject's structure in the image. In regard to this, in Mosse's work, the use of black and white photography did not necessarily occur because he wanted to draw attention to such technical aspects of the image, but because infrared thermal imaging as we have seen in the previous chapter was initially designed to record in black and white; colours that appear in thermal images (as one may have seen for instance in other photographs or films), serve only as visual aids in the logic of false colour rendering (as seen in chapter 1), for the accurate interpretation of temperature differences on the subject. Finally, black and white photography can also symbolize other things that the photographer may want to represent. That being said, the use of black and white photography can be interpreted for instance in the sense that gray has been argued to be the colour of theory; specifically, according to Flusser:

"Black-and-white situations cannot be found in the world "out there" because they are limits, "ideal situations." Black is the absence of light, white is the total presence of light. Black and white are "concepts," for instance, of optical theories. Since black-and-white situations are theoretical, they cannot be encountered as such in the visible world. Gray is the color of theory. Black-and-white photographs display this fact: they are gray. They are images of theories."⁶⁹

Therefore, as black and white concepts are theoretical and cannot be encounter in the real world, the interpretation of Mosse's use of black and white infrared thermal images can be found in his attempt of giving form to the invisible, and subsequently as a reaction to the alleged reality press photography offers.

⁶⁸ Flusser, 1983, p. 44

⁶⁹ Flusser, as quoted in Van Gelder, and Westgeest, 2011, pp. 53-4

Photography since its inception was used in order to record facts which were often - but not necessarily - of historical value; photography's supposed truthfulness made it the dominant instrument for the purpose of recording and envisioning a wide range of events.⁷⁰ In addition to this, photography has been associated with claims of truth and indexicality more than any other means; specifically, the level of immediacy and transparency photography offered, surpassed any of that the traditional artistic practices (for instance painting, graphic arts, and sculpture) could provide.⁷¹ As previously mentioned, indexicality and iconicity are two basic aspects of representation in photography; indexicality refers to the recording of the reflected light from the subject on the photosensitive surface, which subsequently forms a visual analogy to it, while iconicity refers to the degree of likeness to this subject. In order for a photograph to lay claims of truthfulness in representation, it must consist of both; meaning, a photograph's subject has to bear resemblance to its actuality, and its index has to be conceptually analogous. The relationship between these two aspects is what establishes the rate of veracity and truthfulness a photograph has to reality. However, another important and commonly associated aspect in this equation is the photographer's, camera, and object's existence at the same time and place.⁷² In this regard, the producer in this case was at the same time and place where the occurrences he recorded took place; the produced photographs suggest an index of the crisis and everything that occurred before the lens.

The creation of an image and the extent to which a photographer contributes to it, has been a commonly discussed topic among theorists. For instance, film theorist André Bazin has argued that photography is only capable of recording an objective reality, as a photographer's contribution to image making is narrowly defined by the automations of the camera.⁷³ In contrast to this however, according to the art historian and theorist John Tagg on the significance of the image in his book *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*, "the indexical nature of the photograph - the causative link between the pre-photographic referent and the sign - is therefore highly complex, irreversible, and can guarantee nothing at the level of meaning."⁷⁴ That being said, the choice of camera, lens, angle and frame, subject of the photograph and how to edit, and other aspects of the creative process in image making, induce photography with a highly subjective

⁷⁰ Bann, 2001.

⁷¹ Bolter, and Grusin, 1999, p.30

⁷² Elkins, 2007, p. 369

⁷³ Bazin, 1980, pp. 240-1

⁷⁴ Tagg, 1993, p. 3

character. In addition to this, semiotician Clive Scott has argued that the totality of choices in the creative process of image making, and subsequently its outcome, establishes a particular *style* in each individual photographic case.⁷⁵ Taking this into account, in my case study, Mosse's representation of his subject can be interpreted not only as an approach, but also as a style; it was his choice to represent the subjects in his photographs the way they appear. Despite photography's capability to indexically capture the way things appear in front of the lens, how they will eventually be depicted is up to the photographer's choice. Representation is neither 'rational' nor objective, but is constructed according to creative and theoretic sets and conventions the producer decides to employ, which eventually produces a particular outcome.

It is a common "photographic trap" to treat photographs as duplicates of reality, as doing so is an "illusion" according to Scott.⁷⁶ As previously mentioned, the level of immediacy and transparency that photography offers towards realism might be greater in contrast to other media, but that is not to say that it is greater than that of the human eye. It has been argued that photography has reached a peak point of representing reality with regard to the "Classical system of representation"⁷⁷; that is a system of representation deriving from the traditional arts and their pictorial efforts of representing realism, that have established a framework of conventions and methods of understanding photography as a medium. For instance, renaissance aesthetics aimed to represent a three dimensional understanding of reality in a two dimensional space by the use of perspective grids;⁷⁸ such artistic representations could be said to have shaped the understanding of reality in art (at least in the Western world).

The notion of realism in art – to display reality as transparent, direct, and truthful as possible – is itself a human established idea which means that representation of realism is unavoidably a structured imitation. To this regard, photographic realism has been structured upon "very shaky foundations"⁷⁹, as it is cultural education and perspectives that have trained the eye to find similarity between real-looking images and reality. Therefore, the strongest point that such an image makes is that it accomplishes to represent 'realism' as desired in the traditional art forms; in other words, between icon and index, iconity comes first for the interpretation of an image as 'real'. In this respect, the fact that a rectangular image is

⁷⁵ Scott, 1999, pp. 21-2

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 9

⁷⁷ Owens, 1992, p. 89

⁷⁸ Hooper-Greenhill, 2003, p. 42

⁷⁹ Scott, 1999, p. 9

perceived as real, is because it is an artistic convention, as neither the eye's retina nor lens shape are rectangular; it is the shape of the photosensitive surface that determines the shape of the final image, a (round) lens would produce a round image if the shape of the photosensitive surface was also rounded. Mosse's images are not different in the sense of what is true to the eye; for example, as shown in the video of his interview, his still images of sceneries were made by taking multiple photographs of the same subject and then combining them in the same process as stitching a panoramic image.⁸⁰ Taking this into account, the level of detail that (especially such) images offer is impossible to be identified with how human vision functions; the level of sharpness and the depth of field they display, from one side to the other in a single instance, can never be identified with our vision as the human eye can only focus to one specific point each time. Nevertheless, image's artificially constructed sharpness has been associated with the representation of realism in photography, in the sense that "a transparent window provides a sharp view on the world, whereas a blurred or opaque window makes the spectator aware of the presence of the windows as "interface"."⁸¹

Photography since its infancy has been traditionally understood as a physical trace of nature, and subsequently of truth.⁸² The notion of truth in photography has constantly been under dispute by any action that can directly or indirectly affect it. To name one, the advent of digital imaging has been argued to have radically altered the notion of what photography is in comparison to the analogue one, as there is no more a film negative available "to verify the truth to the image."⁸³ However, according to the art historian Abigail Solomon-Godeau, this concept has long been abandoned and now it is acknowledged that photographs serve only as iconic signs, "translating the actual into the pictorial."⁸⁴ Nevertheless, viewers still tend to consider photographs as indexical documents and rely on them for what they represent.⁸⁵ What shapes our understanding of photography as a document of truth still cannot be phrased with total confidence; in a physical level, as argued by Bazin, it could be photography's irrational power to "*re-present*"⁸⁶ an object as real, or, in a mental one, it could be our belief of photography's "'mechanical' model" that "stresses the necessary and mechanical connections which exist between what we see in a photograph and what was in front of the

⁸⁰ Mosse, 2017.

⁸¹ Van Gelder, and Westgeest, 2011, p. 56

⁸² Galassi, 1981; Green, 2009, p. 104

⁸³ Ritchin, 1991.

⁸⁴ Solomon-Godeau, 1991, p. 169

⁸⁵ Green, 2009, p. 104

⁸⁶ Bazin, 1980, p. 241

camera.”⁸⁷

Concerning digital photography, it has been noticed that viewers’ trust in digital images has decreased due to the ease and quality of manipulation it offers; as it depends on the viewer’s awareness to estimate whether a digital image is manipulated or not – an aspect which continuously becoming more difficult to detect due to the quality of editing – the trust people put in them is usually under careful consideration.⁸⁸ As a result, image manipulation makes an image quite sceptical to indexical value for the benefit of an iconic one, subsequently causing it to be considered less as a document of truth. Regarding the aspect of representation in photography in terms to the photo sensitive material, it is irrelevant whether it is made in film or digital imaging, as according to Sarah Kember, “how can we panic about the loss of the real when we know (tacitly or otherwise) that the real is always already lost in the act of representation? Any representation, even a photographic one, only constructs an image-idea of the real; it does not capture it, even though it might seem to do so.”⁸⁹

As already mentioned, in order to perceive a photograph as indexical to reality, it is important to know on the one hand, whether the producer, camera and subject were present at the same time and place, and on the other hand the whole making process for the creation of the photograph. As evidence to these, in Mosse’s work, other than the method of stitching digital panoramas (Figure 6), he did not use any kind of manipulation or editing as his images were produced this way directly from the camera. In addition, on his website and his personal social media, images of him and his production crew (Figure 7) can be found where he can be found to be present at the same time and place as the portrayed occurrences happened. Subsequently, these two factors contribute to the importance of knowing the producer’s making process for acknowledging a photograph as an index of truth.

At first sight, Mosse’s photographs are distinguished by their iconicity. The use of black and white and subsequently the iconicity of the photographs make them look unreal, as if they have been manipulated by the photographer in order to look this way. Nevertheless, as discussed above, neither manipulation nor editing has taken place as the photographs were produced this way directly by the camera. The viewer is affected by Mosse’s photographs since they are indexical of something that has actually happened in reality; they display the figures of the refugees and offer an evidence of what happened to them. However, the

⁸⁷ Snyder, and Allen, 1975, p. 149

⁸⁸ Gunning, 2004, p. 41

⁸⁹ Kember, 1998, pp. 11, 17

iconicity of these images raise the viewer's awareness of whether to trust them as an evidence to reality or not; apparently reducing indexicality in favour of iconicity. Still, knowing Mosse's making process of the photographs, and that he has been at the same time and place as the occurrences happened in order to record them, the viewer chooses to consider them as a representation of reality.

2.2 The image's oxymoron

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Mosse shares the same working environment as press photographers, and therefore both aim to make representations of the same subject matter. In this part of my case study, an analysis on how press (documentary and photojournalism) photography is affiliated with indexicality and the representation of reality and truth, and how Mosse's work can be compared to this type of photography, will take place. The latter is due to the fact that, Mosse claims himself to be an artist with documentarian influences, photographing themes and projects where usually we can find photojournalists and documentary photographers work at.

How has press photography been associated with the concept of indexicality, and thus the representation of reality? To begin with, the genre of press photography refers to any photography which aims in informing an audience; for the purpose of this thesis, documentary photography and photojournalism will be understood to be part of this genre, since they can both be characterized for their transparent informative character, and objectivity of approach to the subject matters they represent. Documentary photography never had a very precise definition; however, as of today, the term documentary is most commonly understood through the definition of "creative treatment of actuality", as defined by the pioneer filmmaker John Grierson in the 1930s.⁹⁰ In an analysis of this definition the term contains of two aspects that together form the principal foundation of documentary photography; that is the "Creative treatment" [that] suggests the licence of fiction, whereas "actuality" reminds us of the responsibilities of the journalist and historian."⁹¹ In other words,

⁹⁰ Grierson, as quoted in Nichols, 2010, p. 6;

⁹¹ Nichols, 2010, p. 6

the image's initial point, which is a 'flawless' recording of the indexical, raw reality, in its transition to iconicity.

The evidentiary aspect of photography as proof of truth has been widely accepted in the form of photographic documents for what they may represent: an example of this are photographs in identity documents and passports, that are used word widely for the identification of the represented person. This way the term documentary has been associated with claims of legitimacy, accuracy, and truth of a document. In a similar manner, photojournalism appeals to the same aspects of truth, legitimacy, and informative character. However, there is not a clear distinction between the two genres, but only some minor differences could be suggested. According to Scott, photojournalism aims at the instant, and the on-going occurrence;⁹² it acts as the public eye at the heart of a situation, to sharply provide evidence of what happened. While documentary photography still records an action, it focuses primarily on its aftermath and how it occurred, and then presents it with a 'taste' of storytelling, a flow.⁹³

Moreover, it has been argued by John Tagg and Allan Sekula that the concept of documents as a proof of truth is not established on the basis of an image's raw index, but it is a perception deriving from a civil process; a process associated with the institutional use of photography and the *archive* since the 19th century.⁹⁴ Considering its uses, and the founding principles with which documentary photography has been established with, it makes sense that it has been accredited for representing reality and therefore its claim of truth.⁹⁵ In addition to this, the wide use of photography as a mass medium has assisted to the perception of documentary and press photography in general, in this direction.⁹⁶ Documentary photography traditionally is used to transmit 'real' facts and is therefore regarded as a proof of truth. Both documentary photography and photojournalism, they give the viewer the feeling that what they are emitting is totally objective and untouched by the photographers themselves, that they give an exact resemblance of the pre-occurred evidences.

Furthermore, as previously mentioned, photographic realism as in the documentary notion is based on conventions and techniques in order to be regarded as an evidence of truth, and to distinguish press photography's alleged truthfulness from other forms of photography;

⁹² Scott, 1999, pp. 77, 99

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 77-8

⁹⁴ Tagg, 1993, pp. 5-11; Sekula, 2003.

⁹⁵ Stott, 1973, p. 9

⁹⁶ McQuail, 2012, pp. 32-6

for instance, the convention of straight photography and subsequently the use of black and white. However, in the 1960s the technical and aesthetics basis on which documentary character was structured was being challenged, as photographers for the first time began using colour for the purpose of press photography.⁹⁷ Today colour is used exclusively for this purpose, as the black and white technique is employed only in order to make an aesthetic statement or to make a reference with works of the past in this field.⁹⁸ Considering the fluidity of techniques used in this matter, press photography seems to undermine the claim of truth and realism in representation regardless of the technique used however; how can press photography without even remaining ‘true’ to itself and its traditions, lay such claims more than any other genre in photography? As a matter of fact, what is truth in representation and what instance could promise to offer it?

According to the art historian Max Raphael in his discussion about realism in art and the interpretation of it in his book *The demands of art*, “mere existence is thus made into a process, and the result of this process is another existent, an existent of a special kind, founded upon a new entity of the conflicting elements as perceived by man and embodied in matter. To the viewer of the work of art this man-made yet ‘autonomous’ reality is immediately accessible.”⁹⁹ In other words, realism in representation is unachievable; it is a combination of factors that determine the interpretation of an artwork, an interpretation which is governed by human made laws. For instance, such a law could be the concept of *genre*, which according to the film theorist Steve Neale in *Questions of genre*, it is the expectations that accompany a genre that structure the perception of the image by the viewer.¹⁰⁰ That being said, not only in terms of representation but also of genre, press photography has developed a particular aesthetic, which after years of practice has deeply rooted in the viewer’s understanding of what press photography is, acquiring this way the impression of objectivity;¹⁰¹ meaning, the ever-present press photography aesthetic in the media came to be casually approved by the viewer.

Considering the aforementioned, Mosse’s work would not differ in its claim of truth if instead of black and white the images were coloured; as in either case his work would appeal to the sign of the index towards reality, but neither technique’s pictorial representation would

⁹⁷ Price, 2015, p. 127

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 129

⁹⁹ Raphael, 1968, p. 11-2

¹⁰⁰ Neale, 1990.

¹⁰¹ Scott, 1999, p.78

be realistic. In press photography, manipulation of the image is prohibited, while only some minor adjustments are allowed. For instance, according to some of the rules of the *World Press Photo* – a famous organization known for its annual press photography contest – “Changes in density, contrast, color and/or saturation levels that alter content by obscuring or eliminating backgrounds, and/or objects or people in the background of the picture, are not permitted.”¹⁰² In this sense, Mosse’s work would be regarded as adjusted to the extremes, and therefore perceived by the viewer as a pictorially sophisticated aesthetic choice. In contrast, as stated above, press photography’s aesthetics are perceived as indifferent between each case and are therefore regarded as ‘normal’. Therefore, regardless of the amount of editing (which usually occurs to a respectable degree), conventional press photography obscures its supposed, persuasive realism behind its iconicity and quantity, and thus misleads the viewer about its reality. That being said, Mosse’s work does not try to conceal its iconicity by employing typical press photographic techniques or conventions, but it does the opposite. More specifically, it shouts of its special, seemingly manipulated iconic character, which contradicts to a ‘granted’ realism as it can be found in press photography; an iconic character which to a large extent would be perceived as artificially composed, but in opposition, it is quite indexical.

Taking into account press photography’s informative character, photographs of this genre are usually found in the context of the mass media. “The term ‘mass communication’ was coined, along with that of ‘mass media’, early in the twentieth century to describe what was then a new social phenomenon and a key feature of the emerging modern world that was being built on the foundations of industrialism and popular democracy.”¹⁰³ Both of these terms refer to the organized means of communication; a one way flow of sharing information, at a distance, to a broad audience, and in a short period of time. Considering what journalism idealistically is – that is a transparent, unbiased, and indexical representation of raw reality – in practice it is abstaining a lot from that. Especially in contemporary times, private and individual mass media corporations, may convey intended message and adjust information’s significance according to their particular agendas.¹⁰⁴ For instance, according to the media theorist John Fiske in his discussion on mass media content, in popular media such as the television, “the preferred meanings ... are generally those that serve the interests of the dominant classes; other meanings are structured in relations of dominance subordination ...

¹⁰² World Press Photo, 2018.

¹⁰³ McQuail, 2012, p.4

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

the semiotic power of the subordinate to make their own meanings is the equivalent of their ability to evade, oppose, or negotiate with this social power.”¹⁰⁵

In addition, (press) photography operates in a similar manner. According to Solomon-Godeau, “the photographer's desire to build pathos or sympathy into the image, to invest the subject with either an emblematic or an archetypal importance, to visually dignify labour or poverty, is a problem to the extent that such strategies eclipse or obscure the political sphere whose determinations, actions, and instrumentalities are not in themselves visual.”¹⁰⁶ That being said, considering the theory of the apparatus as has been previously mentioned, an image produced by such means (apparatuses) is called a “technical image”; according to Flusser, “Technical images are difficult to decode ... What one sees on them therefore do not appear to be symbols that one has to decode but symptoms of the world through which, even if indirectly, it is to be perceived.”¹⁰⁷ Considering that the mass media cannot offer an objective view, while press photography might try to do so but cannot show the political and economic structures that shape reality, an image produced according to a particular system (i.e. apparatus) should never be perceived as true or neutral.

That being said, Mosse in his project decides to operate separately from any means that might affect his work’s significance. Both *Heat Maps* and *Incoming* have not widely circulated in mass media, but instead, they were limitedly produced and exhibited in selected spaces;¹⁰⁸ which can be interpreted as in a sense that his work was not made in order to appeal for mass ‘consumption’. His photographs were made under careful consideration and under a time-consuming process of planning out the project; something which is not usually the case in press photography, as photographers can be sent in a moment’s notice to a particular place for the coverage of an event. Mosse being a master of his medium and work, he decides what to focus on, how to produce it, and how to represent it; an approach which highlights Solomon-Godeau’s argument, which is that photographers should maintain control over their work in order to “rethink documentary.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Fiske, 1987, p. 126

¹⁰⁶ Solomon-Godeau, 1991, p. 179

¹⁰⁷ Flusser, 1983, pp. 14-5

¹⁰⁸ Mosse, 2018.

¹⁰⁹ Solomon-Godeau, 1991, p. 183

Mosse maintaining control of his work, he manages to avoid market strategies that could subsequently affect its meaning and significance. In contrast, this is not the case in press photography, as the news media control and set the context of how press photographers' work will be displayed. Mosse's work is associated with an artistic, subjective context, and therefore, the emphatic iconic (yet indexical) character of the images he produced distances them from conventional practices that are employed in press photography. This way, his photographs do not have to 'obey' to any particular rule of legitimacy, or artistic convention the apparatus of press photography and mass media may set, giving the freedom to his work to be subjectively perceived by the viewer.

However, his images are indexical to reality regarding the representation of the subject matter; the unrealistic black and white of his photographs might not make the subjects look exactly as in reality, yet the recorded elements are there, forming this way a causative link (indexical trace) to reality. As indicated, realism is an artistic convention that has been embedded in society and deceitfully related to truth. Imitation of reality as 'seen' in press photography is not there, because Mosse's images accentuates on their supposed realism by expressing a dreamlike truth through the use of black and white thermal images; meaning, that his work erodes the foundation between the differentiation of objective and subjective representation in (press) photography, that are related to index and icon respectively. In this respect, his work forms an issue of representation on the concept of realism and objectivity of representation in press photography.

Chapter 3 – The issue of representation, and an alternative method of representing in photography

In the previous chapter we have seen how a comparison between Mosse's work and the practice of press photography, has highlighted issues of representation on objectivity and realism of the latter. Central to the third and final chapter, is the issue of representation regarding how photography is incapable of completely capturing reality (particularly in similar environments that Mosse usually shares with press photographers; those are field of agony, despair, and pain). In addition, how alternative forms of representation that exist in photography may contribute and provide a solution to this issue, and how they can be detected in Mosse's work.

As previously mentioned, photography has been associated with the notion of truth since its infancy. However, so far it has been argued that there are issues relating to this matter – the representation of truth in photography – yet photographic genres such as press photography's continue to promote and exist through this notion. Therefore, in the first part, it will be explored to what extent press photographs can contribute to the significance, and the transition of reality between an occurrence and the viewer's experience. Can press photographs contribute to the actual reality and significance of the subject matter they represent (in other words, do they offer essential understanding of represented human pain for instance), or their plethora only serves to extend the viewer's understanding of this cause in a dubious manner?

In the second part of this chapter, alternative forms of representation that exist in photography will be explored. An analysis of how such forms of representation argue on a weaker link towards reality, which eventually offers space for imagination and a more subjective interpretation of reality in photography. That being said, a study on how Mosse's work relates to such forms of representation will take place. It will be explored how his work offers the possibility for the viewer's thought to wonder, which activates the spectator and offers at the same time a more qualitative experience and significance towards the subject matter they represent.

3.1 The issue of representation

It is rather true that photographs are an attempt and a tool to represent reality, but this cannot be absolutely the truth; due to the fact that within a single image a photographer cannot record everything that is happening in front of his camera, he simply records a scene, an instant of a situation.

Regarding photography in critical environments (such as conditions of war, famine, survival or other disastrous situations), and specifically the one in this case study, photography is not capable of representing what has actually happened in those situations during the occurrences or after they have finished; they only offer a suggestion of what has actually happened. Considering the limitations of photography regarding representation that have been mentioned so far, it could be taken for granted that photography is incapable of fully presenting reality in critical conditions. As a matter of fact, it has been argued that photography might be incapable of representing any reality in this sense. Specifically, according to the media theorist and artist Martha Rosler in her book *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975-2001*, in a time where the notion of documentary is under threat since the “post-photographic” practice loses its interest towards reality and thus weakening photography’s link towards indexicality, “the epistemological status of the image—its relationship to a phenomenologically present visual reality—denigrating its (metonymic) adequacy in relation to the situation it depicts and problematizing the ability of any image of a visual field to convey lived experience, custom, tradition, or history.”¹¹⁰ A similar argument has also been made by the scholar Alan Trachtenberg in *Albums of War: On Reading Civil War Photographs*, that photography is incapable of offering the viewer the actual experience and conditions that occur, and especially in critical situations this division is further extended; as specifically mentioned, “the photograph seems to remove itself, and us, safely beyond controversy and threat.”¹¹¹

In the work of Mosse, one can see the figures of the refugees that are moving from the battlefields to find a safe shelter into a different country, where they can also request asylum. However, what one cannot see behind Mosse’s photographs, are the difficulties and the tribulations that these people have gone through before leaving their country; these war

¹¹⁰ Rosler, 2004, pp. 210-1

¹¹¹ Trachtenberg, 1985, p. 2

photographs cannot display the war violence, the abuses, the people's psychological state, the actual experiences they had et cetera. These factors are let to the viewer to imagine and bring into mind, yet one that has not ever been through such a situation, cannot perceive it and therefore, cannot really understand.

Despite its inability to completely represent reality at its fullest, photography yet offers suggestions of the recorded event. This issue in photography's representation, which separates the reality of an event and everything that accompanies it (for instance the subject's emotions and feelings) from the viewer's perception, highlights the division between essential reality and photographic representation. In this regard, photographic representation should not be regarded as truly indexical, and therefore be taken under careful consideration in terms to what photographs represent; not to say that photography necessarily obscures the truth, but not also that it is always correct. That being said, contemporary photography (and especially the photojournalistic one) in order to carry some sort of representational value, seems to demand new approaches towards the subject matter and its representation; as argued by Hüppauf, "It is the abstract nature of modernity which seems to require conceptual modes of representation rather than a pictorial duplication of visible."¹¹² With this in mind, as it has been observed in the previous chapters, traditional press photography aesthetics that values an image as 'true', would never allow for an alternative form of representation that would alter an alleged pictorial 'realism' to take place for the purpose of this cause. Any photographic cause, especially one of photojournalistic interest, is usually a very complex matter in order to be pictured in photographs. In the case of the refugee crisis, the war in Syria - or any war - did not occur out of a simple, single straightforward reason; it occurred out of a combination of multiple factors, which include numerous economic and political interests from many sides (which for the most part, especially in cases of war, they are not fully publicly revealed). Therefore, photography will probably never be able to achieve the total illustration of such (immaterial) matters, and thus to present their complete realism.

Considering the ubiquity of press photography and its aesthetic effect on the viewer's perception as mentioned in the previous chapter, press photographs as entities became so common that subsequently affected their represented subject to the extent that it becomes itself cynical; the abundance of press photography which repeatedly offers quantitative rather than qualitative representations of a subject matter, makes the content to be trivially

¹¹² Hüppauf, 1993, p. 45

perceived by the viewer to the degree that makes it indifferent from other representation of the same issue, therefore disregarding it or perceiving it with less than appropriate importance.¹¹³ In addition to this, according to the professor and mass communication theorist Denis McQuail, “the mass media provide an inexhaustible supply of images of a pseudo-reality that serves instead of experience and becomes for many hard to distinguish from reality itself.”¹¹⁴ This way the content of a photograph and its significance not only can be reduced to a minimum, but even the viewer’s broader perception of its own being can be under crisis; in other words, if a person entirely replaces actual experiences with images that offer pseudo-reality – a realistic looking yet distorted representation of reality – that person might lose track with actual reality to a certain extent, and therefore not be able to distinguish between what is real, what is not, and what actually matters. It might in fact in many cases no longer be possible to distinguish pseudo-realities from an ‘actual-reality’.¹¹⁵

Repetition of content is an essential strategy of mass media that has a critical effect on the viewer’s understanding of it.¹¹⁶ However, repetition of content can also imply the exhaustion of its significance, which subsequently causes the viewer’s indifference towards it. In this regard, the great amount of photographs on the refugee crisis that circulates in mass media context could be said to have cancelled the sense of compassion towards the subject matter. Not to imply that people are indifferent or they do not have feelings towards these people, but it can be said that due to the plethora of photographs on the refugee crisis it impairs the viewer from generating genuine sense of interest, and subsequently feelings of empathy towards the subject matter; thus desensitizing, and causing the viewer to overlook the issue. That being said, the work of Mosse in contrast to the conventional press photography on the refugee crisis, could be argued to generate and maintain this kind of feelings towards the issue and the subject matter. The increased visual difference that his photographs offer is strikingly different from conventional works on the same matter, capturing this way the viewer’s gaze and imagination, which subsequently causes the viewer to visually wonder through the photograph and also try to mentally comprehend the significance of this issue. However, as mentioned above, photography is incapable of recording complex factors for the cause of war like the one in Syria, therefore it is due to this particular visual difference that intensifies the effect of such traits; traits which are lost in the

¹¹³ Kracauer, 1993, p. 434; Sontag, 2004, p. 6

¹¹⁴ McQuail, 2012, p. 130

¹¹⁵ Baudrillard, 1994; Debord, 1995.

¹¹⁶ McQuail, 2012, pp. 468-9

jungle of contemporary press imagery, that offer a sense of human sympathy towards the pain of these people and thus causing the viewer to visually attend the representation.

The visual particularity of Mosse's photographs further contributes to the effect they have on the viewer's perception towards the subject matter, and also on the notion of the documentary. Considering that in his images the visual clarity is reduced due to a very basic understanding of the figures, it is impossible to distinguish between the represented figures and to name who each person is in specific, even if one knew. According to Mosse, the anonymity of the subject in his work was something that he much sought after.¹¹⁷ By doing so, Mosse manages to avoid any kind of biased interpretation towards the represented figures, or of their alignment; in other words, what they stand for, where they are coming from, or a view on their ethical or moral perspectives. The fact that the figures are maintaining their anonymity means that they also preserve their privacy; privacy which is a rather sensitive topic, especially in the case of these people who would not like to be identified in the case of their possible exploitation in the future. In this sense, Mosse does not invade the human right of privacy of these people in any way, and also he manages to solve a narrative dilemma; the dilemma of either not tell a story through photography because one (the producer for instance) wishes to avoid revealing the identities of people (due to ethical or other reasons), or to tell a story in a way which people cannot be identified (which occurs in this case as it is impossible to identify people due to the visual aesthetics of thermal infrared photography).

The reason for this approach could be interpreted in the sense that traditionally, the documentary practice usually represents weaker classes in a society.¹¹⁸ Mosse's ethical approach to the subject matter in this sense could be characterized as a way to avoid this tradition, as he abstains from revealing the identities and alignments of these people. In contrast, press photographers do not usually have these kinds of ethical issues, or appears not to, since they continue to photograph the way they do on the recording of similar cases (in regards to the privacy and identity of people photographed). When press photographers record people, they usually emphasize feelings and facial expressions in an attempt to give a sense of emotion to the image by the subject. However, it is not possible to truly record such

¹¹⁷ Mosse, 2017.

¹¹⁸ Price, 2015, p. 98

aspects like human emotions in a photograph, because they are ever changing, intangible matters of human mentality and are therefore not physically visible in any way.¹¹⁹

In this respect, Mosse's photographs do not, and could not truly represent aspects of human behaviour and existence, emphasizing this way photography's inability to record actual emotions and the personal stories behind the represented people; highlighting this way the issue of representation in photography and the producer's acknowledgment of it, which is that photography is not capable of recording emotion or displaying something more than the actual materiality of things.

3.2 Deconstructing photography's traditional form of realistic representation

So far it has been argued that photography cannot pictorially represent reality, or either do justice to the totality of human existence; rather, it offers fragmented notions of each one. These two aspects are the primary factors for the issue of representation in photography as have been described above; an issue which raises fundamental questions regarding photography's capability to represent.

There have been artists and theorists of photography who disregarded the discussed problematic issue of representation – that is photography's incapability of a truthful and complete to the subject matter representation – or any alternative modes of depiction in photography, in the sense that the latter is forever bound on recording the world as it is; that is true and objectively. For instance, Bazin has asserted that photography “involves a technique of inscribing reality, for ever tied to the obligation to depict what is there.”¹²⁰ In addition, Jeff Wall has also claimed that photography is incapable of representing anything “beyond depiction ... [as it] cannot find alternatives to depiction.”¹²¹ Also, Wall continues, “photography has not been able to participate ... in the exploration of abstraction.”¹²² In this regard, considering photography's inability of representing the entirety of things as have been

¹¹⁹ Rosler, 2004, p. 221

¹²⁰ Bazin, as quoted in Van Gelder, and Westgest, 2011, p. 16

¹²¹ Wall, 1995, p. 247

¹²² Wall, as quoted in Van Gelder, and Westgeest, 2011, p. 52

described so far, in addition to photography's lack for alternative depiction, it should be asked whether photography has any meaning, and value in representation at all.

It has been indicated in the previous chapter how a viewer is used to the iconicity of realistic-looking photographs, which subsequently causes confusion between photographic realism with actual reality. In regards to this, Mosse in his work tries to contradict to this understanding of photography, and offers space for imagination in order to avoid common forms of depiction in documentary photography, and therefore their established history of representation.

The option to do so – to offer space for the viewer's freedom of imagination to take place beyond a particular pictorial index – could be interpreted as a step towards the avoidance of the artist's authority, in the sense of questioning the given information and its significance. In relation to this matter, according to the linguist and critic Umberto Eco, "Every work of art, even though it is produced by following an explicit or implicit poetics of necessity, is effectively open to a virtually unlimited range of possible readings, each of which causes the work to acquire new vitality in terms of one particular taste, or perspective, or personal performance."¹²³ In addition, it has also been argued that intellectual fabrications of occurrences can be more powerful than the rendition of credible reality.¹²⁴ Considering on the one hand the significance that an informative media (such as press photography) can have in people's minds, and on the other hand how meanings can be influenced and altered according to particular agendas of the news media producers (as described in the second chapter), audiences should always be aware and consider the 'distance' from the displayed subject and the authority which provided it. The viewer should be the one to question first of all who defines what is real, then decide what is real and what is not, and then filter the intended meanings by the authority of the producer (the artist in this sense); in other words, the viewer should be the meaning-maker and lay critical analysis on the (theoretical) origin of the information, and not just be a consumer of blunt meaning by the provided object (information) itself.

Such approaches towards the interpretation of an artwork - especially one of journalistic nature – highlights that the relation between journalism and art is under crisis; specifically, "information and opinion increasingly blend into one another; the documentary

¹²³ Eco, 1979, p. 63

¹²⁴ Cramerotti, 2009.

is blurring; a distinction between actuality and fiction may no longer be accurately made through traditional means.”¹²⁵ That being said, considering that “it is in the physical nature of the medium to depict things,”¹²⁶ a possible alternative to traditional means of representation would be to make the viewer acknowledge and be aware of the notion of media. Therefore, the concept of *hypermediacy* could be an alternative way of representation in photography; a concept which can directly address photography’s issue of representation. According to the media theorists Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin in *Remediation*, hypermediacy is the idea to not look *through* a medium (in other words, its content), but *at* the medium itself.¹²⁷ In this sense, the photograph does not offer a transparent expansion to reality, but is itself subject to its own materiality. Thus the producer aims to make the viewer acknowledge the photograph as a medium instead of drawing the viewer’s attention the photograph’s content, and subsequently endorse this acknowledgment.¹²⁸

According to the theorist and art critic Rosalind Epstein Krauss, an artist has to “reinvent” the medium of his or her choice on the basis of its history in order to be further developed.¹²⁹ Taking into consideration Mosse’s work, and his approach towards the (documentary) practice of photography as have been mentioned so far, it could be said that he is an artist that has acknowledged the issue of representation and worked towards the reinvention of his medium; a reinvention of the representational aspect of photography. Gazing upon Mosse’s work, the viewer encounters an obstacle; that is the conceptually vivid surface of the photograph, which derives from the iconic contrast between his photographs and realistic-looking photographs of the same subject matter. In contrast to conventional images of press photography on the refugee crisis, Mosse’s work does not offer the typical ‘realism’ that one would expect to find on this subject matter; this way, his work deconstructs the *expected* photographic ‘realism’ in relation to conventional photographs of the same issue.

Heat Maps and *Incoming* do not offer visual clichés that are found in the ‘realism’ of conventional press photography; an alleged realism, on the basis of which the effect of realistic-looking images takes place, that subsequently further blocks the viewer from understanding the contexts of represented subjects and issues. In light of this, it would be

¹²⁵ Cramerotti, 2009, p. 14

¹²⁶ Wall, 1995, p. 247

¹²⁷ Bolter, and Grusin, 1999, p. 34

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Krauss, 1999.

appropriate to say that the notion of ‘realism’ in art should not be regarded as a neutral and ahistorical practice.¹³⁰

It has been indicated in the first chapter that infrared photography has been primarily used for military purposes in order to give form to something that could not be seen with the naked human eye; in other words, something invisible. In this case, this capacity of infrared photography could be interpreted as a metaphor for the impossibility of representation of human emotions and feelings. As has been argued so far, Mosse’s photographs offer openness for personal and subjective interpretation. In this photograph (Figure 1) for example, the viewer is presented with an image that does not force any particular, pre-composed authoritative meaning as it is; the viewer is left to analyse and form meaning for whatever it is representing.

The photograph does not offer specific insight on which these people are, or where this photograph was taken at; what is only clear is that it displays some people at a campsite, but overall its significance and interpretation remains rather neutral and unknown. For instance, they could be soldiers, campers, or wandering travellers residing somewhere. Only by acquiring bits of information about the context of the represented subject, the viewer may come up to an understanding of what this photograph is referring to; that is the refugee crisis. Until that moment, the viewer is left wondering what the represented subject is, and in addition, due to its particular aesthetic, the viewer might also question the materiality of the object itself. For instance, the viewer could wonder: is it a photograph? And if it is, why does it look so unusual? It does not even resemble a regular black and white photograph, the tonicity and distribution of gray looks rather different and unusual. Could it be a (surreal) painting?

The evident openness, ambiguity, and confusion emphasize the hypermediacy in Mosse’s work. The viewer’s awareness rises to an alarming rate due to the distinct aesthetics of the photograph, questioning therefore the object itself and subsequently its content. Only when the viewer realizes the context behind Mosse’s photographs may come up with a more complete understanding of them, and only in that case a viewer could make a comparison between realistic-looking photographs of the same subject and Mosse’s realism and then question the content; in other words, the viewer proceeds to the processing of the content after having already being aware of, and questioned the materiality of the medium itself.

¹³⁰ Tagg, 1993, p. 175

Considering how abstract the concept of human suffering and conditions of disaster are, it could be argued that instead of trying to realistic record and represent such issues – that are bound to fail in terms to a realistic representation – it would be more productive and qualitative in regards to significance, to reduce their likeness to the issue. Therefore, the viewer has more space to imagine and offer a personal, subjective interpretation on the subject matter. However, it should be taken into consideration that the practice of reducing a photographs likeness to the extremes – for the purpose of leaving room for the viewer’s interpretation - could cause the content to lose any sense of reality, and therefore become a total abstraction.

Matters of suffering, war, death and tragedy of a human being are very important issues that should not be left *unattended*; unattended in the sense of recording and representing such issues without any sense of control, or ethical responsibility for the outcome and the significance of its meaning.

In this chapter it has been argued that photography is not capable of representing the total truth of the recorded subject and its context. Therefore photography is only capable of recording the physicality of an instant by pictorial means. Mosse’s work does not necessarily try to speak of truth, but in contrast to press photography, it does not try to violate the viewer’s understanding on the represented subject; an otherwise ethical and democratic approach, which offers room for imagination and subjective interpretation of meaning.

In addition, Mosse tries to give a solution to the issue of representation in photography, by employing alternative means of presentation; the intentional reduction of blunt indexicality and iconicity, for the purpose presenting enigmatic figures that leave space for the viewer’s personal and subjective interpretation, which subsequently brings the viewer to a position to lay critical analysis on the origin of the provided information, and the notion of media and representation. The unrealistic but yet indexical means of representation that Mosse employs in his work, activate the viewer by making him or her to question the represented content. The viewer comes to comprehend essential differences between what is real and what is not in the photographic representation, and also become aware of his or her expected visual tendencies. Subsequently, this causes the viewer to question the truthfulness of the represented subject, but also make him or her aware on a broader scale of the notion of representation in photography.

With the reduction of blunt indexicality, the viewer's attention is drawn to the photograph itself rather than its content. In this way the effect of hypermediacy is highlighted in Mosse's projects *Heat Maps* and *Incoming* and makes the viewer to look *at* the photograph for what it is; suggesting a solution to the problematic issue of representation in photography.

Conclusion

In this thesis taking as a case study the work of Richard Mosse regarding the representation of the refugee crisis, it has been investigated to what extent claims of truth and reality, can be represented through photography. More specifically, it has been examined how the representations of the refugees in his work can interrogate notions of truth that are theoretically found in the aspect of representation in photography at large, and press photography in specific, and how the use of infrared photosensitive material contributed to this cause. Mosse's use of infrared photography formed an interesting dichotomy: while infrared photography was initially used for military purposes to uncover the invisible, Mosse applied this technique to make visible what authorities would like to keep invisible; that is the problematic issue of the refugee crisis. In addition, Mosse's use of infrared also made evident, brought to the foreground, and interrogated claims of truth and realism in photography; claims out of which genres such as press (informative) photography continues to exist.

In the first chapter the use of infrared photography has been analysed, its history and previous uses, and eventually how it has contributed to the purpose of Mosse's work. Infrared imaging had, and still sees, extensive use in the military field - but also in other fields such as art, and in this case for a humanitarian purpose - in order to give form and significance to something which could not be seen with the naked human eye or normal cameras; a medium capable of extending human vision. In addition, by the use of complex photographic equipment he made a statement in the working field which he shares with press photographers; that he is trying to find new perspectives for the representation of the subject matter. Displaying eventually in this way the extent to which the creative development and process of the producer contributes to the significance of the image, and debates aspects on photography as mechanical (and scientific) image.

In the second chapter, the notion of reality and claims of truth that exist in photography – and particularly in the field of press photography – have been studied. It has been indicated how 'realism' deriving from the concept of the index (of the causative link to reality) should not be taken for granted in regards to what a photograph represents, and also that the concept of 'realism' is an artistic and cultural convention that has come to be confused with actual reality. Furthermore, the fact that Mosse maintained control of his work

and exhibited it mainly in galleries and museums, made his work avoid mass media market strategies that as an effect have the alternation of context and significance of an artist's work. In addition, by associating his work with an artistic and subjective context and therefore rejecting traditional conventions of realism, his work is clear of any rule of legitimacy that would value his photographs as 'true'. In this regards, the viewer has the freedom to subjectively interpret and perceive his work. The clear and open stylization of his photographs makes the viewer aware of the represented reality. However, the photographs are still indexical, and in a comparison with the 'realism' of conventional press photography, the borders between objective and subjective representation are stressed; the ambiguous representation of his photographs makes it difficult to designate what is 'true' on the basis of the causal link, as there is not a straightforward distinction between the elements of the index and the icon.

In the third and final chapter - which is in close relation with the second one in regards to the discussed topics – the idea of what encapsulates complete truthfulness in photography has been studied. It has been indicated that photography apparently cannot record a complete reality, as situations that include human suffering and pain are very abstract and intangible to be recorded in photographs. In this sense, Mosse's work does to manipulate and trick by making the viewer think that photography is capable of capturing and representing such aspects, by avoiding the possibility to display and feature any such notion through to the use of infrared photography; contrasting in this way realistic-looking images that claim to do so. As a result, Mosse's seemingly artificial and unusual photographs (in comparison to ordinary methods of photography) highlight an alternative mode of representation which activates, and draws the attention of the viewer to photography as medium, has been argued to be a solution to photography's impossibility to record the world as it is; that is the effect of hypermediacy, which in this case study it raises awareness of photography as a medium, and trains the viewer to comprehend what constitutes a medium and what is the essential difference of looking through it rather than at it.

The confusion between the expected reality and the reality Mosse offers becomes evident when the viewer looks at the producer's photographs of the refugee crisis. His eerie and horrific at first sight black and white photographs, present an unexpected reality, which as the viewer becomes aware of what they represent and the producer's idea behind its construction comes to realize the beauty of this work. The producer through his work alarms the viewer of how manipulative and persuasive 'truth' in photography can be.

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Illustrations



Figure 1: Richard Mosse. *Heat Maps*. Detail of Idomeni Camp, 2016.

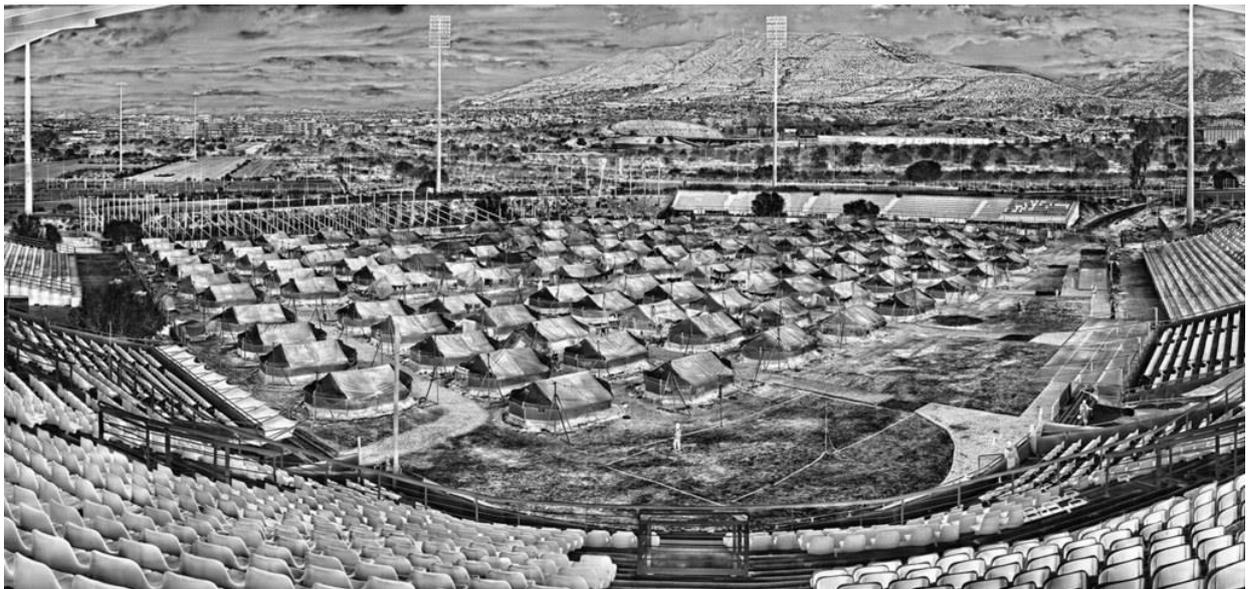


Figure 2: Richard Mosse. *Heat Maps*. Hellinikon Olympic Arena, 2016.



Figure 3: Richard Mosse. *Incoming*. 2017. Still frame from *Incoming*, three screen video installation, 52 mins 10 secs, with 7.1 surround sound.



Figure 4: Richard Mosse. *Incoming*. 2017. Still frame from *Incoming*, three screen video installation, 52 mins 10 secs, with 7.1 surround sound.



Figure 5: Album cover of The Jimi Hendrix Experience. *Are you experienced*, 1967. The photograph for this album was made with infrared film. Various other artists used the same technique for expressing their art at the time.



Figure 6: Screenshot from the video of Richard Mosse's interview *In Conversation*, showing the post-process of his photographs of landscapes.



Figure 7: Screenshot from the video of Richard Mosse's interview *In Conversation*, showing a member of his production crew carrying the digital infrared camera used for his work on the refugee crisis.